

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

**Minutes  
March 21, 2007**

**Attending:**

**RMAC:**

**Representing**

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association
Mike Connor	Public Member
Clancy Dutra	California Farm Bureau Federation
J.R. McCollister	Public Member
Chuck Pritchard	California Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts
Scott Carnegie	California Forestry Association
Leonard Hale	Watershed Fire Council of Southern California
Mel Thompson	California Wool Growers Association
Jeff Stephens	CAL FIRE / RMAC Executive Secretary

**Members of the Public:**

Robert Mandrell	USDA Agricultural Research Station
Steve Schoenig	Department of Food & Agriculture
Crispin Holland	USDA Forest Service
Jennifer Gilles	California Department of Transportation
Tracy Schohr	California Cattlemen's Association
Eric Huff	Professional Foresters Examining Committee

**Items 1 & 2 Call to Order and Introductions:**

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M. He indicated that the agenda will not be taken in order and deferred approval of the minutes from the January RMAC meeting until later in the morning.

**Item 4, E. coli Occurrences and Water Quality Implications to the Range and Livestock Industry, Robert Mandrell USDA Agricultural Research Station Reporting**

Ken Zimmerman stated that he had met with Robert Mandrell in early March at the ARS facility to discuss E. coli with a variety of stakeholders and government entities. He asked Robert to initiate the discussion. Mr. Mandrell stated that since 1995 there have been 22 outbreaks in leafy vegetables, at least 10 of which have been traced back to California's central coast area. Investigations of the most recent outbreaks have resulted in locating the pathogen on the source property. The spinach outbreak investigation of 2006 is one of the best ever done. The Department of Public Health initiated the study. There have been previous outbreaks in 2002 and 2003 related to spinach and lettuce produced in the Salinas Valley.

The 2006 spinach outbreak was sourced to a particular ranch and ARS was asked by Department of Public Health to participate in the investigation. Over 200 samples of soil, water, feces, and compost were examined for the pathogen. Everything came up negative with the exception of a ditch near a field. The pathogen found did not match the 157 strain of E. Coli associated with the 2006 outbreak; however, the work lead to more extensive studies of the watershed as part of a TMDL study with Department of Water Quality and this testing did produce positive tests for E. coli 0157:H7 in the watershed. It was found in the Salinas River along with other water bodies. A pattern was revealed over the two year period where the presence of the pathogen was noted in the lower watershed after heavy rain events indicating transport of the pathogen by storm runoff into the bay and lower watershed. Highest concentrations were noted from point sources in the Gavalon Mountain Range on rangelands. Stocker cattle on these properties have not been tested to date. A report on the 2006 spinach outbreak is due out quite soon.

There was extensive testing done on 4 ranches implicated in the 2006 Spinach outbreak within the King City, Monterey, and San Benito County areas. All of these ranches tested positive in varying degrees. One in particular had 16% of its samples testing positive for E. coli 0157:H7 which is quite high. This is a cattle ranch that leases some of its ground to spinach growers. Feral pigs, water from the San Benito River and some dirt samples taken from pasture land also tested positive. Robert Mandrell summarized his findings by stating that there exists some point sources of the pathogen at the higher levels of the watershed, and there is the one ranch of the four previously mentioned that had unusually high levels of the pathogen.

Mike Connor asked how the pathogen is actually incorporated by the plant to later become a problem for human consumption. Robert Mandrell responded stating that plant uptake is not believed by his lab to be the mode of infection. He speculates contact between the pathogen and leafy material occurs by flooding. Producers are now avoiding production of leafy vegetables in areas prone to flooding. Other methods of infection could be birds, insects, and dust. Feral pigs are highly suspect since they roam wherever they wish regardless of fencing. Mr. Mandrell identified mowing as a possible source for spreading the pathogen. He emphasized that a major outbreak such as the 2006 event requires a significant event to spread the pathogen that involves water. Reservoirs and wells were tested but failed to produce the pathogen.

Leonard Hale asked if other bacteria may play a part in the spread related to plant uptake. Robert Mandrell responded by stating their laboratory tests show that once the pathogen contacts the leaf it bonds tightly. Rinsing and sonication was not effective at removing the pathogen. Therefore, he concluded that spread is far more likely through leaf contact rather than internalization. The processing facility would be ineffective in removing it.

Robert Mandrell stated that the pathogen is highly dynamic in that not every sample tested positive. The same location can be positive one day and negative the next. He also stated that convergent events such as the case of 2006 where a wet spring coincided with a hot July could be responsible for the high levels observed. Geese, gulls, pigs, and cattle are all potential carriers. Mr. Mandrell stated that he is currently working on a four year study in the Salinas Valley that will be doing extensive sampling. Rob Atwill UC Davis is working with him and has been meeting with cattle ranchers in

the region as of late. Royce Larsen with UC Davis Cooperative Extension is also working on the grant.

Chuck Pritchard asked if this has ever been a problem with fresh produce that has not been packaged. Robert Mandrell responded stating that it has and speculated that wash water used in cleansing the material before packaging may play a role. Chuck Pritchard then asked if the occurrence of the pathogen and associated outbreaks has been there for a very long time and is just now receiving attention. Robert Mandrell speculated that sporadic illness has occurred in previous years and it has been building unnoticed. His guess is that new outbreaks will occur in association with transport events such as high rainfall. Chuck Pritchard asked if human feces are related. Mr. Mandrell does not believe that septic systems or contact by field workers is related due to the circumstances required to concentrate the pathogen. It should be looked at but he does not believe it to be a factor at this point. Chuck Pritchard asked the source of the stocker cattle whether they were domestic or imported. Mr. Mandrell's investigation indicated that the cattle were not imported and originating from areas west of the Mississippi. He further stated that the investigators noted common strains of the pathogen that occurred on ranches up to 35 miles apart. This suggests transport movement of cattle among ranches or wild pigs. Chuck Pritchard asked if infected animals show symptoms. Mr. Mandrell responded that symptoms are not readily apparent.

Mike Connor asked if the infection of a ranch is permanent. Robert Mandrell stated that it is not known. The studies of animals indicate that it can come and go between samples.

Chuck Pritchard asked if the refrigeration process between bagged and fresh differ in a way that would account for increased growth of the pathogen? Robert Mandrell stated that above 25 degrees centigrade significant growth occurs. The product whether bagged or not is supposed to be transported in refrigerated trucks.

Ken Zimmerman asked if irrigation frequency has anything to do with infection given that the 2006 outbreak occurred with high July temperatures. Robert Mandrell stated that it has not been studied but that it is possibility that irrigation occurred at a level above normal to save a crop threatened by high temperatures. Ken Zimmerman asked if natural fog in the Salinas Valley may play a role in infection. Mr. Mandrell stated that fog in the morning followed by warm temperatures could provide a conducive environment for growth but this is all speculation.

Mr. Mandrell noted that one source of infection that is very difficult to control is simply bad practices. Farmers that use raw manure or compost that is not composted properly will show high concentrations of E. coli.

Ken Zimmerman asked if other wildlife had been sampled; deer, rodents, etc. Robert Mandrell stated that rodents are a possibility but have not been sampled. Two samples were taken of deer feces in the infected area and tested negative. Pigs are known carriers and are very prevalent in Monterey and San Benito counties.

Leonard Hale asked if other areas have been tested besides the Salinas Valley region. Robert Mandrell stated that Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties have tested pigs but the results were negative. He added that tests near the point source show decreasing pathogen populations as the test moves farther downstream from the source.

**Item 5, California Department of Transportation Vegetation Treatment Program, Jennifer Gillies, Senior Environmental Planner Reporting:**

Jennifer Gillies began by stating that she deals with invasive species in her program with CalTrans. There were several questions from RMAC that were forwarded to her by Jeff Stephens prior to the meeting that she will respond too.

Question 1: The first was if CalTrans has a program that addresses the expansion of weeds from CalTrans right of ways to neighboring rangelands. They do have a vegetation control program known as Veg Con that is an integrated control program. Chemical, manual, mechanical and some biological methods are used. CalTrans works with the Weed Management Area personnel (WMAs) to map and control noxious weeds. CalTrans is testing new thermal units for weed control; however, they were described as being quite expensive.

Question 2: Jennifer Gillies stated the next question by RMAC is whether CalTrans uses Certified Rangeland Managers (CRM) in work that potentially impacts rangelands. Ms. Gillies explained that they do not currently employ CRMs since the lands they operate on are not classified for rangeland use or managed as rangelands. They do use Licensed Pest Control Advisors for completing writing weed control prescriptions.

Question 3: Does CalTrans take into account timeliness of the treatment regarding the characteristics of each species? Jennifer Gillies stated that they have 161 landscape crews in the state, but they are under funded and under staffed. Hence they can not always treat plants according to their biology. They do give priority to some species that are high priority for control.

Question 4: Please explain the CalTrans Good Neighbor Program. Jennifer Gillies stated each district is allocated maintenance funding each year and the authority to decide how it shall be spent. The priorities are sight distance, safety, as well as how the priorities of CalTrans would be met. They seek projects where the landowner is contributing to the project so that costs and labor are shared. Each district has landscape personnel that may be contacted for the Good Neighbor Program. Jennifer Gillies distributed a handout showing the CalTrans Districts and contact information.

Ken Zimmerman asked, what is the CalTrans' protocol for cleaning equipment prior to leaving a site. Jennifer Gillies stated that it is a potential problem and could not comment as to whether there is a set protocol. She stated that Linda Hamel would be consulted and a response made to Jeff Stephens.

Ken Zimmerman asked if other counties (besides Mendocino) have a no spray policy. Jennifer Gillies responded stating that she did not know if a no-spray policy existed for other counties. She did confirm that a no-spray "agreement" existed for Mendocino County in the right of way.

Mike Connor noted that the use of a PCA is certainly adequate for prescribing herbicides; however, in other cases the lack of knowledge of when not to mow or spray is apparent. He cited yellow star thistle being mowed when fully loaded with mature seed as a source of infestations on adjoining property. He also noted that an understanding of soil erosion resulting from the removal of vegetation is needed.

Jennifer Gillies stated that their Storm Water Control Group is working on the soil erosion problem. Steve Schoenig commented that CalTrans is experimenting with a concept called chemical mowing that uses sub-lethal rates of herbicide that stunts the vegetation without total removal. He explained that CalTrans is in a tough position because of many different interests that have different objectives (weed control, fire control, and erosion control). The objective may be line of sight on winding roads and fire control in other cases.

Ken Zimmerman asked if the Road Side Vegetation Management EIR is still used by CalTrans for road side vegetation control. Jennifer Gillies stated that it is still used. Ken Zimmerman expressed a desire for RMAC participation of any review or amendment to the EIR.

J.R. McCollister asked about the listing of Longhorn Beetle used as a biological agent for control of eucalyptus shown on the CalTrans handout. Steve Schoenig stated that there is no permitted process for moving Longhorn Beetle around as a biological control since it is considered to be a pest of eucalyptus by those wishing to maintain the species rather than treat it for control.

#### **Item 6: Discussion of the Proposed Paper: Integrating Natural Resource Management in California with Resource Conservation Investments**

Ken Zimmerman opened discussion on the proposed draft. He noted that the text discussing the California Working Lands Stewardship Advisory Council may best be deleted and that a discussion of the California Rangeland Resolution (CRR) be substituted in its place. Mike Connor concurred.

Ken Zimmerman asked Chuck Pritchard about the status of Joe Morris' contribution to the paper. Mr. Pritchard replied that he has asked him on several occasions to submit the paper. Per his last contact Mr. Morris intends to honor the request from RMAC.

Ken Zimmerman then asked Tracy Schohr to prepare a substitute paragraph describing the CRR to be used in place of the section describing the California Working Lands Stewardship Advisory Council. Ms. Schohr agreed to provide the written text on the CRR.

Tracy Schohr noted that the whole goal of the RMAC paper is to create a Coordinated Natural Resource Management Plan, and asked for confirmation that she is correct. Ms. Schohr stated that there is currently another proposed plan before the legislature (Wildlife Action Plan) which in her opinion has received extensive critical review from the Farm Bureau and California Cattlemen's. She asked that RMAC consider whether this is the appropriate time to propose the creation of yet another plan when so much attention is being focused on the Wildlife Action Plan that does not support working landscapes, and is need of revision. Ken Zimmerman stated that he is not aware of the other plan and would like to make a review. Tracy Schohr recommended that RMAC examine the Whitehouse Cooperative Conservation Initiative that brought multiple federal agencies together and wished for RMAC to be aware of other parallel tracks similar to RMAC's endeavor. Mike Connor did not find sufficient reason to halt RMAC's effort as long as the objectives stated on page 5 that involve all stakeholders is maintained within the document. Mel Thompson asked if Tracy Schohr could capture her concerns and place them in the context of CRR goals with the text she is submitting

for the California Working Lands Stewardship Advisory Council. She agreed provided the edits from Jeff Stephens could be obtained.

The word “volatile” received considerable discussion. Ken Zimmerman will search for an alternate word that conveys the same meaning but more acceptable to RMAC as a whole.

Tracy Schohr asked what is expected from the people that receive the cover letter and the paper on integrated resource management. Ken Zimmerman responded stating that he would like further input from the recipients on developing the paper for submission to the Resources Agency. Tracy Schohr stated that there needs to be language stating clearly what is being asked of them. Ken Zimmerman stated that the cover letter is critical to the paper for meeting this need.

Mike Connor asked Tracy Schohr what kind of letter would be needed in order to better attract participation from the California Rangeland Coalition (CRC). Ms. Schohr stated it is important to note that the CRC does not focus on public lands at all; keeping private lands private is the CRC focus. Therefore, the Coalition as an organization may not be interested, but a few coalition members may wish to contribute. Mike Connor stated that the purpose of his question to Ms. Schohr was to try and determine what would attract people or groups to take an interest, and he further proposed that a meeting to communicate face to face RMAC's objectives may be more productive than just sending the paper and a cover letter. Tracy Schohr concurred that a meeting focused on key cooperators would be valuable. Mel Thompson asked if RMAC has the authority to convene a meeting. Ken Zimmerman and Mike Connor concurred that what we deliver to the Board must have the support of key participants and the meeting is part of this effort.

Clancy Dutra suggested that in order to bring closure to the task of completing the paper that a date be set for all revisions to be submitted to Jeff Stephens, followed by a conference call that accepts all final edits. Final acceptance of the paper and cover letter would be possible at the May RMAC meeting. RMAC agreed and Ken Zimmerman specified that all comments are due back to Jeff Stephens by April 11. The conference call will occur on April 25. Time will be 11:00 AM.

#### **Item 9, Agency and Association Reports:**

##### **USDA Forest Service, Crispin Holland Reporting:**

Crispin Holland reported that the USFS is still doing its NPEA planning. Last year they completed 60 grazing allotment decisions which represent 40% of their accomplishment. This year they are backing off on administration of the allotments and focusing more on NEPA analysis. The effect is to create Range Conservation vacancies with some of the National Forests. He hopes to complete 60 decisions this year. Tracy Schohr asked if the plan is to continue packaging allotments together. Crispin Holland stated yes, some forests may package 4-6 allotments within the same NEPA analysis.

Crispin Holland stated that he has authority to use categorical exclusions until the end of this fiscal year. Some allotments have been closed if they were not being utilized or economical to operate. He confirmed that they could be reopened with sufficient interest.

Ken Zimmerman asked about the Cooperative Monitoring Program status. Crispin Holland stated that of the 540 allotment permittees they have 40 that are signed up for cooperative monitoring.

J.R. McCollister asked if allotments are advertised. Crispin Holland stated no.

Mel Thompson stated that the news he has heard most recently is that allotments are being closed such the case with Big Horn Sheep. Crispin Holland responded that they are being closed in some cases, but that there are others where access is being restricted in critical habitat, or shifted to other forests where open allotments exist.

Crispin Holland stated that the Yosemite Toad Livestock study is going into its third year on the Stanislaus National Forest. Various levels of grazing are being analyzed.

California Cattlemen's Association (CCA); Tracy Schohr Reporting:

Several California Rangeland Coalition (CRC) members will be traveling to Washington DC next Tuesday and Wednesday to promote accessibility to various Farm Bill programs in general, and make the programs more accessible and appealing to California ranchers. They will also be working on conservation tax incentives and endangered species protection tax incentives. A total of fifteen CRC representatives will be in attendance including environmental representatives. They will be working with urban legislators. CCA is working with the Resources Agency on the Wildlife Action Plan. CCA just hired a new person for the Industries Affairs position.

Chuck Pritchard noted that government funding for NRCS and GLCI is being cut and recommended that Tracy Schohr raise this issue with the legislators since the agencies will be hard pressed to deliver programs without staff. Tracy Schohr responded affirmatively noting the budget cuts.

California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA); Steve Schoenig Reporting:

Steve Schoenig reported that he just returned from Washington DC where he attended a National Invasive Weed Awareness meeting. He met with legislators and staff promoting the option of having funding available for Weed Management Areas within conservation incentives programs.

CDFA received a \$4.4 million grant to do weed control. Steve Schoenig is in the process of rolling out this program. The California Conservation Corps has potential to service the program. This amount is being combined with USFS money (\$300,000) to treat infestations on private land in cooperation with the County Ag Commissioner. RCDs have stepped forward to administer these dollars via a contract with CDFA.

Steve Schoenig stated that there will be an agency and stakeholder review of the State Weed Management Plan to assess what has been accomplished. The Plan has been out for two years.

Steve Schoenig stated that he believes there will be an attempt to establish a certified weed control specialist similar to other state specialty certification programs. The need for a

specialist has recently come to light since the most common restoration work being done is tied to weed control.

**Item 7, Review of the Society of Range Management California Pacific Annual Meeting and Discussion of the Certified Range Manager (CRM) Program:**

Ken Zimmerman noted that Eric Huff was able to join the RMAC meeting. Mr. Zimmerman stated that he and Mike Connor attended the California Pacific Section of the Society of Range Management Certification Panel for CRMs in Reno. Mike Connor reported that the Panel made a review of the Board's draft policy on the use of specialty certifications of which CRMs are the only one presently. The Panel forwarded recommendations for changing the policy to Eric Huff and the PFEC.

Eric Huff stated that he is not certain that he received all comment on the policy. He further stated that it is his impression that Mike Stroud will draft a Board policy that is specific to CRMs. Mel Thompson asked if the new policy was going to impact what a CRM can do on a forested landscape. Eric Huff clarified that a forested landscape is the area where a CRM has authority to manage rangeland versus that of an RPF. Mel Thompson stated that the policy rewrite is a good opportunity to provide guidelines under which the RPF vs. a CRM is required. Mike Connor confirmed with Eric Huff that he would support bringing forward a separate policy that covers CRMs specifically.

Mike Connor in discussion that included Mel Thompson restated the need to clarify where a CRM is required per the existing California Code of Regulations (CCR). Eric Huff responded stating that the code section pertinent to specialty requirements (CCR 1651) is subject to change and that this would be an appropriate opportunity for RMAC to have input. Eric Huff stated that the Policy statement currently endorsed by the Board is intended to provide guidance to Counties when faced with alterations to vegetation on forested landscapes.

Mike Connor asked RMAC if they wish for him to pursue the issue of clarification of CRM requirements with Jim Bartolome and Mike Stroud in hopes of producing a policy that RMAC, PFEC, and the Board may agree upon. Mel Thompson so moved and J.R. McCollister seconded. Subsequent discussion by Ken Zimmerman and Mel Thompson asked for clarification if the intent of the motion is to have Mike Connor act as merely RMAC's representative or to actually serve on PFEC during Mike Stroud's absence. Eric Huff stated that it would be best that he merely represent RMAC during discussion and recommended that RMAC be represented when discussing policy pertaining to CRMs. Clancy Dutra objected to handling the issue with a motion and argued that it is part of RMAC's role to interface with the PFEC on rangeland issues. The motion was withdrawn and Mike Connor was identified by Ken Zimmerman to serve as RMAC's representative to attend PFEC meetings.

Ken Zimmerman noted his preference that the need or requirement for a CRM is better determined by the practices being proposed rather than the current definition of a forested landscape. Eric Huff stated that the definition of a forested landscape for CRMs is problematic and that it should be the practices performed that define the need for a CRM. Mr. Huff agreed to schedule the CRM issue on the next PFEC agenda and to also obtain a copy of the current policy accepted by the Board for RMAC members.



Eric Huff reminded RMAC that the purpose of the current policy letter dealing with specialist was to address the perceived problem of the conversion of oak woodlands with no RPF or CRM oversight. It was driven by consumer protection issues. Mike Connor asked that Board Policy # 11 be reviewed by RMAC members. Eric Huff will provide a copy to Jeff Stephens for distribution. Clancy Dutra asked if it would be a topic of the April 25<sup>th</sup> conference call. Mike Connor decided to discuss the CRM issues at the May Rangeland Focus Group meeting.

#### **Item 8, CAL FIRE Vegetation Treatment Program Policy Review and VTP EIR:**

Ken Zimmerman asked Mike Connor and J.R. McCollister if they have any comment regarding the VTP EIR review or Program Policy Review. Mike Connor submitted written comment on the Policy Review spreadsheet to Jeff Stephens. Scott Carnegie asked for clarification as to what would be provided and what his responsibilities would be. Jeff Stephens responded stating that in all likelihood a nearly complete copy of the Administrative Draft would be provided. It would be Scott Carnegie's responsibility to review the draft and bring forward those items that he felt to be of significance to RMAC.

Ken Zimmerman made a change in the persons responsible for the second round of EIR review replacing J.R. McCollister and Mike Connor with Neil McDougald and Scott Carnegie.

#### **Item 10, New and Unfinished Business:**

Ken Zimmerman mentioned a request from UC Davis for nominees to receive an award for distinction among UC Davis alumni and staff. He asked that RMAC consider any person they feel worthy of nominating for the award.

Ken Zimmerman stated that he received a copy of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Management Plan. Chuck Pritchard asked that a copy be provided to him.

Mike Connor noted that the Assembly Budget Committee is once again considering a tax on private land for fire protection. He cited \$10 per acre. Currently the Legislative Analyst Office is considering the proposal, but it has not received a legislative sponsor.

#### **Item 3, Review of the January 2007 minutes:**

Mike Connor asked Clancy Dutra if he would provide information on the Prather and Belcher ranches discussed at the last meeting on how they were being managed under public ownership. Clancy Dutra agreed to provide more information to Mike Connor next week.

Corrections to the minutes were noted by Jeff Stephens. Clancy Dutra made a motion to accept the minutes as written with any minor corrections that do not change intent to be submitted to Jeff Stephens. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Jeff Stephens passed out a letter from the Resource Protection Committee that was in response to the RMAC letter asking for clarification on the VTP Program and Policy Review. Ken Zimmerman asked that RMAC review for future discussion.

#### **Item 8, Public Comment:**

NONE

Adjourn